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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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# Report of the Secretary-General submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/22

## Addendum

## Introduction

1. In addition to the replies received pursuant to a letter of the Secretary-General dated 6 December 1993, which are contained in document E/CN.4/AC.45/1994/2, replies have been received from: the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (23 March 1994) and from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (31 March 1994). The present report has been prepared on the basis of these replies.

## I. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM UNITED NATIONS BODIES

### United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

2. In its reply UNCTAD referred to a paper which it had submitted earlier to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, at his request, in order to allow him to prepare for the first regular session in 1994, of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the agenda of which included the follow-up to the World Conference on Human Rights. In that paper it had indicated some of the concrete obstacles to development and also the possible contribution of UNCTAD to the collective endeavour of the United Nations system aimed at promoting the realization of the right to development by all States. That contribution would consist of the following:

(a) Demonstrating to what extent and through which mechanisms the restrictions on access to markets, the decrease in commodity prices, the inadequacy of development finance and the weight of the debt overhang constitute real and concrete obstacles to development;

(b) Identifying the main determinants which shape the international economic environment and the policy orientations required for making the latter favourable to development;

(c) Advising, in its fields of competence, on measures and policies essential for fostering development in the national framework.

3. UNCTAD further drew the attention of the Working Group to issues such as overcoming the debt crisis and the internalization of environmental costs, which, in its opinion, are critical for reinvigorating international economic and social cooperation in the contemporary world context and hence - to the realization of the right to development.

4. Lastly, it drew the attention of the Working Group to contribution of UNCTAD to a paper entitled "Agenda for development".

5. All the publications referred to are available for consultation in the secretariat's files.

## II. REPLIES RECEIVED BY SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

### Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

"1. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has taken note of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/22, entitled 'The right to development', and the concept that the right to development is a universal and inalienable right by virtue of which every individual is entitled to participate and contribute to economic, social, cultural and political development. Given the mandate and role of FAO, the constraints and problems affecting the right to development relate principally to the provision of adequate food and nutrition to ensure optimum physical and social well-being of the population, which is from the point of view of the individual nothing more than the most important of human rights, the right to food.

"2. The development of a world food security system that facilitates the process of assessing and monitoring the food security situation at the global, regional, national and household levels, as well as ensuring that the countries facing serious problems receive the appropriate technical aid and training, has been one of the major themes pursued by FAO in recent years. The main objective of food security is to ensure that all peoples at all times have both the physical and the economic access to the basic foodstuffs they need to lead healthy lives, and as such is the principal means through which the right to food can be articulated. The main aspects of food security are related to food availability, to stability in the flow of supplies and to access to food, especially by those who are the most vulnerable.

"3. At the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN) in December 1992, jointly sponsored by FAO and WHO, representatives from 159 countries and the European Economic Community recognized the right to adequate food and nutrition and declared their commitment to ensuring this right in the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition in the following words:

> 'We recognize that access to nutritionally adequate and safe food is a right of each individual ... Bearing in mind the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we pledge to act in solidarity to ensure that freedom from hunger becomes a reality.'

"4. For several decades, the right to adequate food and nutrition has been recognized by the international community. However, obstacles denying millions of people this right continue to exist. These constraints originate in varying political, economic and social spheres and converge upon those individuals who, on a day-to-day basis, simply do not have the necessary means to achieve nutritional well-being. Achieving good nutrition is considered an essential component of developing strategies not only because it is necessary for raising the productive capacities of individuals but, more importantly, because it expands intrinsic human choices by allowing them to enjoy longer and healthier lives.

"5. It is estimated by FAO that there are currently nearly 800 million people in the developing world who are considered to be chronically undernourished. This means that there are nearly 800 million people who do not receive a daily diet that is adequate to allow them to lead healthy lives. This also means that there are nearly 800 million people who cannot enjoy one of their basic human rights, the right to adequate food and nutrition. The fact that there are over 2 billion people who are also deficient in one or more of the required micronutrients indicates that the problem has additional dimensions.

"6. It is increasingly recognized that the most important cause of this situation, and therefore the main obstacle to achieving the full enjoyment of the right to food by every individual, is poverty. Thus, the obstacles to the right to food are essentially the same as those that hinder the eradication of poverty. In the developing world, where the majority of the world's poor live, these are inextricably linked with obstacles to development, particularly with obstacles to agricultural and rural development. In this respect, it should be noted that the majority of the world's poor earn their living by producing food and in most poor countries employment and income opportunities in all sectors, not just agriculture, are closely linked to how productive agriculture is in those countries, which in turn depends on the capability of people to be effective and productive agents, the relative endowments of natural resources, and the availabilities of man-made physical capital.

"7. Thus, inequities in land and income distribution, lack of education and training, and barriers to access to inputs, including those embodying new technology, to services and markets and to finance constitute important economic and social impediments to the realization of the productive potentials in agriculture and to the enjoyment of the right to development.

"8. Both direct and indirect discriminatory practices in the public and private domains deny certain groups such as women, children, minorities, indigenous groups, refugees, the elderly, the disabled, and others the opportunity for a nutritionally adequate diet.

"9. Another constraint is the lack of cooperation and coordination among groups providing assistance to those suffering from malnutrition. Governments, United Nations agencies, private industry, NGOs, communities, and others should coordinate their efforts to secure this right to all citizens. Thus, limited resources could be directed more effectively to reach those most in need.

"10. The World Declaration and Plan of Action for Nutrition contains nine policy guidelines and action areas which point to these obstacles preventing people from obtaining adequate food. The first theme is incorporating nutritional objectives, considerations and components into development policies and programmes. By giving high priority to ensuring nutritious and safe food to all members of the country through policies and programmes, the right to food could be realized. Nutrition objectives and components should be considered in policies related not only to agricultural and rural development, but also in those related to access to safe water, sanitation, health services and education, especially that concerned with nutrition education in such areas as preventing and controlling micronutrient deficiencies, protecting consumers through food quality and safety, breast-feeding, and promoting appropriate diets and healthy lifestyles. Those with political power and public consensus in a country must recognize the right to adequate food and nutrition as a basic human right and consider it a priority in a country's policy environment in order to remove the constraints hindering its enjoyment.

"11. There must also be improved assessing, analysing and monitoring of the food and nutrition situation in order to accurately demonstrate the magnitude of the problem and develop programmes to target vulnerable population groups. Early warning and food information systems should be established in areas where potential famine and malnutrition are imminent.

"12. Man-made disasters caused by civil wars and the collapse of economic and political systems, and the vagaries of nature are persistent characteristics of food insecurity around the globe and constitute the most immediate threat undermining the right to adequate food and nutrition. Although such emergency food security problems may not appear to have an immediate bearing on issues related to the right to development, there are two aspects of food emergencies that are directly

related to the obstacles to the implementation and realization of that right. Firstly, whatever the cause of a food emergency problem, if the productive capacity in the afflicted regions cannot be quickly restored, an emergency situation can transform itself into one of chronic food insecurity affecting the development process itself. Secondly, unless significant inroads are made into strengthening the productive base of agriculture through the economic and social development process, vagaries of the weather will continue to hinder periodically the enjoyment of the right to food, especially in the vulnerable areas."

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